

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

August 2007

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The August luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, August 16, 2007, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Tentative program plans are being finalized as the newsletter goes to press. Reservations may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, August 15, 2007, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to sixty people. The price of the lunch is \$7.00 payable at the door. The gumbo Prima prepared last month was outstanding!

2007 HALLOWEEN TOUR

We need volunteers to serve as actors, guides, hosts/hostesses, etc., so that this year's Halloween tour will be one of the best ever. If you'd like to volunteer, please call the Kate Lobrano House at 467-4090. A special "thank you" goes out to those of you who have already volunteered!

HELP!

WE NEED A VOLUNTEER
WHO HAS WEBSITE EXPERI-
ENCE TO HELP RECON-
STRUCT OUR WEBSITE!

Hancock County Court House,
Bay St. Louis, Miss.



Shown above is the Hancock County Courthouse as it looked when it was first erected in 1911 at 150 Main St., Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi. The building at the back, left, is the jail.

THE COUNTY SEATS OF HANCOCK COUNTY

By
Eddie Coleman

Formed in 1812, Hancock County comprised a much larger land area than its present-day boundaries. Originally Hancock County consisted of what are presently Pearl River, Hancock, Stone, and Harrison

counties. In 1841 it was divided into Hancock and Harrison counties with later divisions of Hancock County into Hancock and Pearl River and of Harrison County into Harrison and Stone. Because the size of the county changed over time and because population centers shifted, Hancock County has had three different county seats during its existence.

In his book *Next Door to Heaven*, S. G. Thigpen gives an

THE

HISTORIAN

OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Published monthly by the
**HANCOCK COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

2007 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles Gray, Exec. Dir.
Mary Perkins, President
Scott Bagley, First Vice President
Barbara Warner, Treasurer
Zita Waller, Secretary
Lili Stahler, Publicity
Jerry Zimmerman, Historian
Ellis Cuevas, Membership

MAILING ADDRESS:

P. O. Box 3356

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi 39521

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

108 Cue Street

Telephone/Fax [228] 467-4090

Notice our new Email address:

hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net

(website currently under
reconstruction)

**LOBRANO HOUSE
HOURS**

MONDAY — FRIDAY

10:00AM — 3:00PM

Closed from 12:00—1:00.

WWW2.datasync.com/historyHancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net**MISSION STATEMENT**

“TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION.”

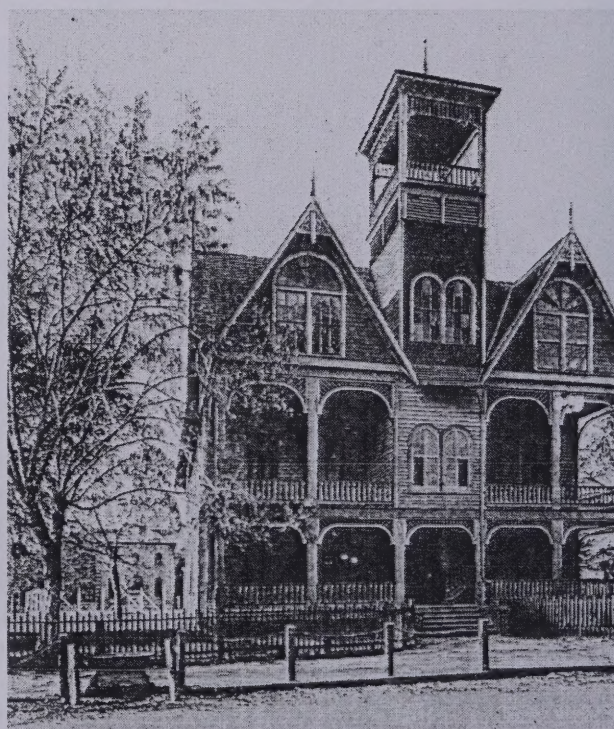
account of the movement of the courthouse within the county. He explains that the first county seat was old Center, which later took the name of Caesar. When Center was chosen as the county seat, a problem arose with its name because there was already another “Center” in Mississippi’s postal records. To avoid future confusion, the name was changed to Caesar. Mississippi was admitted into the Union in 1817, and it was during this same year that the courthouse, a log structure, was erected here. Situated on a “level sandy hammock by the side of a brisk running little stream of cool, clear water,” this locale had been a significant Indian center for quite some time. In fact, many old trails led into and from Center/Caesar. The reason for locating the courthouse here was twofold: 1) It was the geographical center of the county and 2) “because all roads led there, it

was accessible to the people of this new county.”

As people moved into Hancock County, they settled mainly along the Pearl River for two distinct reasons: river travel was easier than land travel and the river became the center of commerce. Thus, the population center of the region shifted. In 1837 the courthouse was moved to Gainesville, which had become a thriving river town in just a few short years. Gainesville remained the county seat even after the courthouse burned in 1853. All land records, etc., were lost in this disastrous fire.

By 1857 the population had moved once again with the majority of people in Hancock County living nearer the coast. For this reason, the courthouse and county seat were moved one final time—to Shieldsborough, now Bay St. Louis. Although it would be another twelve years before the railroad passed

Pictured at right is the first Hancock County courthouse built in Bay Saint Louis in 1874.



through Bay St. Louis linking New Orleans and Mobile, it had been reported as early as 1839 in *The New Orleans Commercial Bulletin* that the railroad was coming to this region. Hence, we may have another impetus for the move.

Notwithstanding that the decision had been made to move the county seat and courthouse to Shieldsborough, not everyone in the county was happy with the idea. In fact, on one occasion it was announced that court would be held in Gainesville, but residents of Shieldsborough who had business at court refused to travel to Gainesville. By the same token, when court was announced to be held in Shieldsborough, county residents who had business at court refused to travel to Shieldsborough! Thus, a dilemma arose.

However, the War Between the States intervened.

When martial law was declared in the South after the war, the decision was finally made. Court would be held in Shieldsborough. A special term of the Court of Police was convened on May 6, 1867, and "[it was] therefore ordered by the Board that the said City of Shieldsborough be and is hereby declared from and after this date the permanent Seat of Justice of said County."

But which existing building would serve as the courthouse for the county? Various locations had been used in the interim since the move had been made in 1857. Among them were the old Custom House and the Masonic Lodge building.

The City of Shieldsborough, however, offered rooms "on the basement or first floor of the main building of the new City-Hall...for the various Courts to be held in Hancock County." The county readily accepted the offer.

Soon the need for more space by the county became a problem, and a new courthouse was built in 1874 on the same site as the current courthouse. On May 20, 1893, the *Sea Coast Echo* reported, "The Courthouse of Hancock is a large two story frame building 50 x 70, which was erected in 1874, at a cost of \$6,000. The court, jury and consultation rooms are upstairs, while the offices are on the ground floor, and these are supplied with fire-proof vaults and all-steel safes, thus rendering the county's records absolutely secure." The article states further, "The courthouse is not of brick nor of stone but of wood, wood from the roof to the floorsills and considering its cost and size, it is the most attractive looking courthouse in the state of Mississippi."

In 1910 the contract for the building of the current Hancock County courthouse was let at a cost "not to exceed the sum of \$25,000." The building was formally accepted by the Board of Supervisors on September 20, 1911. Neo-Classical Revival architecture with a stucco façade gives the edifice an imposing presence at 150 Main Street. Listed as #376 in the National Registry of Historic Places, the building has weathered Hurricanes Camille and Katrina—

damaged, but unbowed. Repairs are currently underway to restore the building to its original splendor.

SOURCES:

Pfeiffer, Jim. *Sea Coast Echo* article. May 17, 1981.

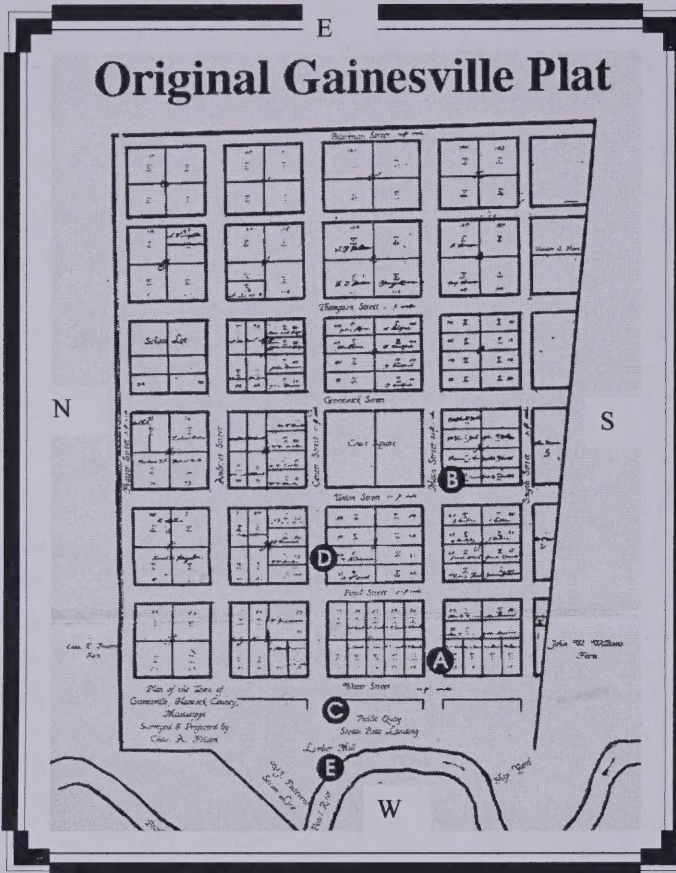
Thigpen, S. G. *Next Door to Heaven*. Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, 1965.

GAINESVILLE

By
Eddie Coleman

The town of Gainesville was founded in the early 1800's by Dr. Ambrose Gaines, who had come to the early settlement of Cottonport located on the Pearl River. Dr. Gaines received the first Spanish land grant for what was to become Gainesville in 1810. Issued by John V. Morales and confirmed by William Crawford, U. S. Commissioner, the grant consisted of five hundred arpents (roughly a little more than five hundred acres). Since there were "squatters" already living on the land, Gaines gave them small parcels, platted the remainder of the land into a town, and sold plots.

Since river travel was much easier than land travel in the early 1800's, Gainesville prospered as a center of commerce. Goods were shipped into Gainesville and transported overland to distant inland settlements. It also flourished as a logging and lumbering center for many years. In 1837 Gainesville became the county seat of Hancock County, and the courthouse was moved here. During his travels throughout south Mississippi in



This is a map of the original layout of Gainesville with the Pearl River shown at the bottom which makes north on the left, east at the top, south on the right, and west at the bottom.

The streets from top to bottom are Blackman, Thompson, Greenwich, Union, Pearl, and Water. The streets running from left to right are Fraizer, Ambrose, Center, Main, and Smyth.

lashed the men with a long whip in her possession. It seems she did such a complete job that the men suffered from their welts for several days!

In the early 1960's, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration acquired 220 square miles including Gainesville to build the Mississippi Test Facility—later renamed the Stennis Space Center. In addition to Gainesville which included the main test facility, Logtown and Napoleon were also engulfed by the buffer zone of the test site. As we have learned from our losses to Hurricane Katrina, it is difficult to see the familiar taken away. In this instance, the words of Dr. Werner Von Braun may offer some solace: "I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the scenery....[B]ut if we didn't come to Gainesville, we'd never get to the moon."

SOURCES:

Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XVIII. January 1956.

Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

Thigpen, S. G. *Next Door to Heaven*. Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, 1965.

1852, Benjamin L. C. Wailes noted in his travelogue, "the Court house [sic] is a very poor frame building." He also described the site of Gainesville as "being a perfectly level one on a bluff bank of East Pearl River with a number of handsome live oaks."

Boats along the Pearl River provided daily transportation for passengers and freight not only to Gainesville but also to Pearlington and Logtown. In 1920 service was discontinued to Gainesville, but it remained for Pearlington and Logtown until about 1930. Individuals also used the river to transport fruits and produce to Gainesville especially on paydays at the lumber mills located there.

When prohibition came to Mississippi in 1908 (before na-

tional prohibition), enterprising Louisianans set up floating bars across the Pearl from Gainesville. Many stories abound about Mississippians traversing the river to partake of the "demon rum" and to replenish their home pantries. S. G. Thigpen relates one such tale which supposedly happened to an elderly (at the time of the retelling) Picayune man. It seems that in 1913 this man along with six other men had traveled in an open car to the Blue Goose, a floating tavern across the Pearl from Gainesville. On the return home they encountered a woman on horseback driving cattle. The car scattered the herd and enraged the woman who promptly gave chase on horseback, overtook the car, and thoroughly

CENTER/CAESAR

By
Eddie Coleman

The original county seat of Hancock County, Center/Caesar was a Choctaw Indian settlement before the first Europeans entered south Mississippi. It was bound by Catahoula Creek on the east and Playground Branch on the west and was the geographical center of Hancock County (before

the creation of Pearl River County). Its original name was a Choctaw term meaning "center" or "coming together" or "where everybody meets up."

Early Europeans discovered the settlement because so many of the original Indian roads converged here, and they, too, decided to build homes here as well. At one time Center/Caesar had a post office, courthouse, jail, hotel, barroom, small stores, and fifty to one hundred wigwams. Apparently relations between the white settlers and the Indians were quite good. Thigpen relates that in 1940 he saw the remnants of "an old dungeon, or jail, and clay deposits for chimneys, evidence of the village there."

SOURCE:

Hancock County Historical Society vertical file

**VOLUNTEERS
NEEDED
TO HELP
WITH THE
HALLOWEEN
TOUR!**

**CALL:
467-4090
TO
SIGN UP**

DEPOT ROW

2-Story Retail • Lofts • Flex Space



Sales Info 228-463-0236 or 228-493-8999

CHARITABLE BINGO AMERICAN LEGION POST #139

EVERY SATURDAY, SUNDAY, AND TUESDAY
6:00 P. M.—DOORS OPEN
7:00 P. M.—EARLY BIRD
7:30 P. M.—REGULAR BINGO

GREENMEADOW RD. BAY SAINT LOUIS, MS.

BAY BOOKS

131 MAIN ST.
BAY SAINT LOUIS, MS.

FEATURED TITLES

Louie the Buoy

Written by Allain Andry, III & illustrated by
Tazewell Morton, III

This is a children's story of a buoy in the Bay of Saint Louis during Hurricane Camille. \$20.00

Who's Your Momma, Are You Catholic, and Can You Make a Roux?

By Michelle Bienvenue

This is a classic Cajun and Creole family cookbook with authentic and soulful recipes. \$22.95

The Encyclopedia of Cajun and Creole Cuisine By Chef John Folse

More than a cookbook, the *Encyclopedia* covers every aspect of these distinctive dishes, exploring their rich flavors and equally rich history with beautiful photographs. \$45.00

Gift ideas for all occasions: beautiful journals, art prints, Jo Rusin chairs, gift certificates

228-463-2688

Tues. through Sun. 10:00 A. M.—5:30 P. M.

Visit us online at www.bay-books.com.

E mail at baybooks@bellsouth.net

Camille Tate Realty
C.I. Tate, Broker



Camille I. Tate, G.R.I.

331 Main Street
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

Phone 228/463-9026
Fax 228/463-9679
Cell 228/216-5339



Merrill Lynch

T N K Group

Steve B. Treutel, CFM
Assistant Vice President
Senior Financial Advisor

Della Arant
Client Associate

Global Private Client

2548 A Beach Boulevard
Biloxi, Mississippi 39531-4733
228 385 6345 Steve
228 385 6331 Della
800 449 0883 Toll Free
FAX 228 273 2007
steve_treutel@ml.com
d_arant@ml.com

Judith Redshaw
Giclee Fine Arts
Museum-Quality Prints

15195 Ponotoc Dr.
Kiln, MS 39556

228-586-2693
228-332-1816

www.gicleefinearts.com

Jet Set

featuring



408 Blaize Avenue
Bay Saint Louis, MS 39520
228.383.5765

Kennie White-Loga

RAYMOND JAMES

Raymond James Financial Services, Inc., Member NASD/SIPC

John "Corky" Hadden
Registered Principal

837 A Hwy. 90
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
www.rjf.com

228.466.9888
888.465.9968
Fax: 228.466.9978

email: corky.hadden@raymondjames.com



TheFirst
A NATIONAL BANKING ASSOCIATION

Dusty Rhodes, President
835 Hwy 90, Suite 4
Bay St. Louis, MS

Phone: 228-270-0030
www.TheFirstBank.com

*Old Friends
New Bank*

Just the Bank for You!

Clay Creations
Jenise McCardell

228-466-6347



220 Main St.
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

*A White Egret
in the Shallows*

A book about the way we were



By
Paul Estronza LaViolette
Available through the Hancock
County Historical Society

Charter Service, Tours, Air-
ports, Cruise Ships

Visa, MC, AMEX, Discover cards
now accepted.



Gulf Coast Transportation

Buses - Vans - Limos

John Muniz
990 Honalo Pl.
Diamondhead, MS 39525

Cell (228)493-2309
Office (800)366-8115
Fax (228)255-3345

MONTHLY TOURS & TRIPS

Sunday, September 9—*To Kill a Mockingbird* Gulfport Little Theater
\$35.00 Leave Diamondhead Community Center at 1:30 P. M.

Sunday, September 23—*Chapter Two* by Neil Simon Center Stage:
\$29.00 Leave Diamondhead Community Center at 12:30 P. M.

Please send checks to Gulf Coast Transportation, 131 Lanai Village, Diamondhead, Ms.
39525 For further details, please call Joan at 228-255-7224 or Doris at 228-255-3345.

SUE ASHMAN, ABR, CRS, GRI
BROKER



(228) 467-5454
227 Coleman Ave.
Waveland, MS 39576

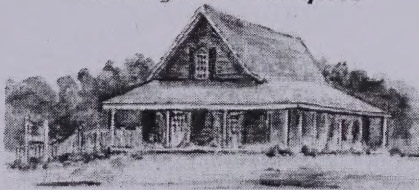
www.Ashman-Mollere.com
Mobile (228) 216-7864
Fax (228) 466-4561

TODD N. THRIFFILEY ATTORNEY AT LAW

PHONE: (228) 467-2400
TOLL FREE: 1-866-670-8681

Countryside Antiques

Countryside Antiques



Established 1978

151 Highway 90
Waveland, MS 39576-2618
228-467-2338

Mike Mayo
Tom Cottom
Cell: 228-493-7264

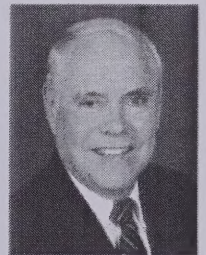
Hours: Wed.—Sat. 10:00 A. M.—5:00 P. M.
Sun.—By chance or by appointment

www.csantiques.com

LATTER & BLUM INC/REALTORS®

JOHN E. HARRIS, GRI ^{Since 1916}
REALTOR-ASSOCIATE®

Office (228) 467-8121
Toll Free 1-800-215-4111 x135
Fax (228) 467-2507
Home (228) 463-1828
Cell (228) 493-4111



1188 Highway 90, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi 39520

Charles B. Benvenutti Certified Public Accountant

Charles B. Benvenutti, CPA, PA
831 Highway 90
P.O. Box 2639
Bay St. Louis, MS
39521-2639

228-467-1402
Fax 228-467-2594
Email: Chuck@Benvenutticpa.com

Handcock County Library - ref. dept. (COMP)
312 Hwy. 90
Bay St. Louis Ms. 39520

U. S. POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 87
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION

HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P. O. BOX 3356
BAY ST. LOUIS, MS 39521

HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

POST OFFICE BOX 3356
BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI 39521

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE AND ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

PHONE (____) _____

ANNUAL DUES \$15 INDIVIDUAL/\$25 HOUSEHOLD \$ _____